Marines Complete CH-53K® Initial Operational Test & Evaluation Test Vignettes

Milestone sets up Marine Corps for CH-53K Full Rate Production decision

U.S. Marines with 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment prepare to board a CH-53K helicopter for an air assault training exercise at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, June 10, 2021. Photo by Lance Cpl. Yuritzy Gomez.

STRATFORD, Conn., April 5, 2022 -- Demonstrating its advanced capabilities in the fleet environment, the CH-53K heavy lift helicopter completed Initial Operational Test & Evaluation test vignettes (IOT&E) paving the way for the expected declaration by the U.S. Marine Corps of Initial Operational Capability (IOC) later this year and a Full Rate Production decision in 2023.

Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin company (NYSE:LMT), built four System Demonstration Test Article CH-53K helicopters and delivered them to the Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron One (VMX-1), in Jacksonville, North Carolina, to support the seven-month evaluation, which concluded in March.

“The performance of these intelligent aircraft during Marine-operated flight tests displays the CH-53K’s operational effectiveness and ensures it will support Marines at the forefront of combat capability and heavy lift for decades to come,” said Bill Falk, Sikorsky’s CH-53K program director. “The CH-53K delivers greater lift and endurance capabilities over the legacy aircraft. Its fly-by-wire system reduces pilot workload and enhances the ability to refuel in midair, which is critical to expanding the Marine Corps operational flexibility across all U.S. and allied military services, making the CH-53K a powerful asset for the Marines evolving missions.”

CH-53K Integrated and Operational Tests Completion

The completion of IOT&E testing follows several CH-53K program markers including:

- Day and night time air-to-air refueling
- Air-to-air refueling with 27,000 lb. external load
- Sea trials with over 350 landings
- Delivery of first six production aircraft

The CH-53K program is on track to achieve Initial Operational Capability (IOC) in 2022. IOC is achieved when the first squadron receives:

- Four CH-53K helicopters with the required personnel suitably trained and certified, and
- Primary and support equipment and technical publications, including initial spares with interim repair support and initial training curricula, are in place and ready to deploy in accordance with U.S. Marine Corps standards.

Building Helicopters for U.S. Marine Corps and Allies

The CH-53K established high-tech production line in Stratford, Connecticut, is active with six aircraft in build, including three on schedule for delivery this year. There are 46 aircraft fully on contract including four heavy lift helicopters for the government of Israel. The helicopters for Israel are under a U.S. Navy Foreign Military Sales (FMS) agreement.

An additional 10 U.S.Marine Corps aircraft are on contract for long lead material. The program of record for the U.S. Marine Corps is 200 aircraft.

The CH-53K will further support the U.S. Marine Corps in its mission to conduct expeditionary heavy-lift assault transport of armored vehicles, equipment, and personnel to support distributed operations deep inland from a sea-based center of operations. This capability is critical in the Indo-Pacific region and around the globe.

For additional information, visit our website: www.lockheedmartin.com/ch53k.

About Lockheed Martin
Headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, Lockheed Martin Corporation is a global security and aerospace company that employs approximately 114,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products, and services.

Please follow @LMNews on Twitter for the latest announcements and news across the corporation.

CH-53K is a registered trademark of the U.S. Navy

Additional assets available online: Photos (1)